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**NOT
IN OUR
TOWN**
STOP HATE. TOGETHER.

Class Actions

Students confront bullying and intolerance

Discussion Guide for Community Screenings



www.NIOT.org

Major support for this program is provided by PBS, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust.

Overview of Film

Not In Our Town: Class Actions is a 30-minute documentary that profiles student leaders working together with community members to create change in the wake of racism, anti-Semitism, and the traumatic consequences of bullying. These stories of courageous, innovative action in three American towns show how young leaders are stepping up to confront intolerance, and finding creative ways to affirm their core values.

About Not in Our Town: Developed by The Working Group in 1995, Not In Our Town began with a PBS documentary that told the story of how people in Billings, Montana joined together to respond to a series of hate crimes in their town. This simple, powerful story of people banding together struck a chord with audiences, and created a model that inspired viewers around the country to hold their own campaigns against intolerance. Not In Our Town has grown from a PBS documentary into a national effort to connect people working together to take action against hate and create safe, inclusive communities.

In collaboration with PBS and local public media partners, Not In Our Town invites organizations and individuals to use film screening events to launch sustained action to build inclusive, respectful schools and communities.

For more information, visit www.niot.org/classactions.

Overview of Film	1
How to Use This Guide.....	2
Preparation.....	3
Logistical Preparation.....	5
Screening Discussion Agenda....	6
Suggested Facilitation Tips and Techniques.....	12

How to Use the Guide

This Discussion Guide is intended for use by diverse school and community groups, law enforcement officials, faith communities, and others as a tool to process the film in a productive and mutually supportive way. The ultimate goal is to inspire action to prevent bullying and intolerance and ensure safety and respect for all.

Facilitators using this Guide should use it as just that – a guide. There will be unique differences, histories and experiences for each group viewing the film, and some questions and areas of discussion may and should be adapted accordingly. However, regardless of the audience, Not In Our Town recommends that facilitators lead audience members through the following sequence of processing.

Personal Reflection

How did the film make you feel?

Knowledge and Learning

What did you learn from the film that you didn't know before?

Action Planning

What do we do now? How do we channel understanding into productive action?

Evaluation

What should be changed to pull even more people into the movement?

The facilitator's job is to guide the audience from reflection to action, recognizing and reminding participants that the screening event is only one step in addressing issues that may be facing their community, and that a long-term and on-going commitment will be needed to create meaningful and lasting change.

Preparation

Facilitators play a crucial role in moving the audience from viewing the film, to understanding the lessons of the film, to taking action in their community. The following ideas and recommendations will help prepare for this role.

Preview the Film

Allow time to explore your own emotional responses to the film in advance of the screening/discussion. This process will allow for more objective facilitation. As well, read the entire Guide before the screening and, knowing the audience, consider any additional ideas and discussion points that may be important to raise or that may be likely to percolate with the specific audience.

Know the Audience

Working with the event planners, review and discuss who will be in attendance and, as needed, assist in developing ways to reach out to a broad range of community members to be at the event. Be sure you know the community's history of division or tension around issues of bullying and intolerance. Be aware too of the positive social justice action that has occurred in the community – which may be helpful to highlight with audience members.

Invite diverse community members

Invite diverse community members to your event, particularly individuals from groups who may be vulnerable to hate crimes. Reach out to local faith-based, civil and human rights, law enforcement, interfaith, and campus or youth organizations.

If public officials will be in attendance, consider how to manage these dynamics. Some officials may seek (or be looked to) to offer a response on behalf of their office or position. While this may be appropriate to a modest degree (i.e., clarifying information or demographic details, explaining a legal policy, etc.), it is important to ensure equality and equal air-time for all audience members. It is also important to acknowledge any negative dynamics that may emerge as a result of existing community tensions with law enforcement or other government officials. Establishing Ground Rules (described below) should help alleviate this potential dynamic.

Review the Goals and Objectives

Discuss with the event organizers their goals for holding this screening and what specific objectives they have for this event as a means to help achieve those goals. The facilitator's job is to keep track of these objectives and to be sure the group gets there.

Keeping track of the agenda and the time is critical to ensuring a productive dialogue. However, it is also important to be flexible and allow the space and time for heated issues to surface and for personal stories and experiences to be shared.

The purpose of the film and the discussion to follow is to invite a thoughtful examination of the role of stereotyping, inflammatory language, intergroup relations, etc. and how residents of a community - regardless of status - are treated and viewed as a result of these factors. Similarly, the film is about the community response to a tragedy, and not an investigation into the murder itself, or any of the many related questions about the youth who committed the crime and the criminal justice system.

There may be passionate advocates in the audience who may seek to use this as a forum for airing personal issues or debate. As such, facilitators may need to redirect the conversation, affirming that the purpose of the discussion is to examine issues of safety and inclusion for the members of the community. The Suggested Facilitation Tips and Techniques located at the end of this Guide can assist with more ideas for managing this process.

Plan the Program

If working with a co-facilitator, review and discuss the Guide contents and decide who will do what, how to monitor the time and how to best support one another in the process. Review any other key roles at the event - greeters, note-keepers, hosts who will offer opening and/or closing remarks, etc – with the event sponsors. Write out a timed agenda for the processing, with all these components included, to be clear on how the sequence and time flow will be managed.

Know What's Next

With screening sponsors, pre-plan follow-up to the action ideas generated from group discussion. This should include a time and location for a next meeting, and someone agreeing to transcribe and distribute the information after the screening.

Logistical Preparation

Working with the event sponsors, make sure that the logistical needs are set prior the event. A few areas to consider:

Time

1-1/2-2 hours, minimum: The film is 30 minutes and at least another 1-1 1/2 hours should be allotted for processing.

Accessibility

In addition to considering the physical accessibility of the selected event space via public transportation and other means, consider language accessibility for the members of the community who may be in attendance. An interpreter should be used if there are non-English speakers in your audience or your facilitator(s) cannot speak the languages represented in your audience.

Room Set-Up

Ideally, the room set-up will allow for people to see one another so that they can dialogue face-to-face, as well as move into pairs or small groups for discussion. If the setting does not allow for this, encourage participants to stand, if possible, when speaking.

Materials Needed

- Easels, chart paper, markers, tape for posting material, sign-in sheets, etc.
- Depending on group size and setting, a hand-held or lavalier microphone may be needed for discussion leaders and/or audience members (and plans made for how the microphone will be circulated, as needed).
- Ground Rules should be written out ahead of time, as well as any other charts or information to help save time during the discussion processing.

Guidelines for Working with Interpreters

If unfamiliar with working with interpreters, these guidelines from Everyday Democracy (www.everyday-democracy.org) may be of help:

- Give interpreters written materials ahead of time and go over the process with them.
- Ask interpreters to let you know if they need more time.
- Explain to the audience that this will be a bilingual discussion and while it may be awkward at first, it will get easier as time goes on.
- Speak in short sentences and keep ideas simple, which allow the interpreter time to keep pace.
- Consider putting people in small groups, but don't separate people by language.
- Look at the participant—not the interpreter—when speaking.

Screening Discussion Agenda

Part A: Before the Film

Who is in the Room?

Icebreaker

If time permits, a brief introduction process can be used which allows participants to visually explore the experiences, backgrounds, etc., represented in the group.

Choose 5-7 statements to use from the list below and/or select others based on the specific community and/or audience. Ask participants to stand if the statement applies to them. Offer the option to raise a hand if standing presents any challenges

- a. You have lived in _____ community for more than 5, 10, 15 years
- b. You are a parent
- c. You are in a public service profession (law enforcement, teaching, government, etc.)
- d. You are a student
- e. You have been bullied
- f. You have witnessed bullying
- g. Your cell phone is turned off (a humorous way to invite everyone to turn off their phones)
- h. You are the oldest (or youngest, middle) child in your family
- i. You have used Twitter
- j. You use public transportation (never, often, all the time)
- k. You feel there is more to be done to make this community a mutually respectful and safe place for all

Introductions and Ground Rules (10 minutes)

1. Welcome the audience and briefly introduce yourself.

Remind participants to sign in. If the group is fewer than 30 people, invite individual self-introductions, including names, where they live, profession, and reason why they attended the event.

2. Transition to an introduction of the film and a review of the agenda. Explain that after viewing the film, they will discuss their reactions and lessons learned from the documentary with the goal of inspiring local action against bullying and intolerance to ensure safety and respect for all. Offer information about breaks, note-keeping or other “housekeeping” details so that the participants feel comfortable with their environment and the process to follow. Hand out evaluation form, which they will complete at the end of the program.

3. Explain that one important step before starting the film is to review and agree to Ground Rules for the dialogue to follow. Explain that these will help ensure a “safe” and productive environment for the group to discuss emotionally-charged and sensitive topics. Review the following suggested Ground Rules with the participants. Invite additional ideas if anyone feels something important is missing.

4. Pass out evaluation surveys.

SUGGESTED GROUND RULES

Ground Rules adapted from *Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide* from the Public Conversations Project at www.publicconversations.org

- We will speak for ourselves and use “I” statements.
- We won’t try to represent a whole group, nor ask others to represent or defend an entire group.
- We will seek to understand one another’s perspectives and beliefs.
- We will listen with resilience, “hanging in” when we hear something that is hard to hear.
- We will share airtime and refrain from interrupting others.
- We will “pass” or “pass for now” if we are not ready or willing to respond to a question—no explanation required.

5. Ask for agreement to honor the ground rules with a head nod or hand raise.

Part B: After Viewing the Film

Personal Reflection: (15 minutes)

1. Begin with a discussion of participants' initial reactions to the film by inviting attendees to form pairs or triads (if possible, with others that they don't know) to take turns answering the following questions. Encourage participants to discuss the emotional response to what they saw:

- a. What was the most upsetting thing you saw in the film?
- b. Who in the film did you most relate to? Why?
- c. What was the most inspiring or hopeful thing in the film?

2. Depending on the audience size, invite participants to report back what they shared in their small groups.

Knowledge and Learning: (25 minutes)

1. Transition to exploring the specific ideas and insights from the film.

The film begins with the question, "How do we learn from the past? From tragedy? From our own mistakes?" Ask participants to identify the tragedies that serve as the undercurrent for these three stories in Mississippi, Indiana and California.

Specific points to touch upon include:

bullying * diversity * bystander * segregation
racism * anti-Semitism * hate crime murder

After participants have identified past tragedies, take the conversation a step further. Why do these past tragedies still matter to the people in the film? Did the students and leaders in *Class Actions* learn from the past? If so, how? Encourage specific examples from the film.

2. Keeping these lessons in mind, ask participant to reflect upon their own community using some or all of the following questions:

- a. In what ways is our community similar to the ones depicted in *Class Actions*? For example, are there customs or action in your community that can be seen as divisive or intolerant? (Consider traditions, symbols, mascots, hazing, etc.)
- b. If so, are actions being taken to address these issues? What are they?
- c. If not, what do you feel is preventing people from taking action? What does it take to overcome this resistance?

- d. How do you respond to people who say, “It’s no big deal,” or “That’s the way it’s always been”?
- e. Who is participating in these actions? If it is largely institutions and community groups, how can they support young people in their decisions to stand up against bullying and intolerance? If it’s largely youth-led actions, how can students reach out to the larger community?
- f. In *Class Actions*, what risks did they take by acting? What did they stand to gain?

3. Ask participants to reflect on the actions taken by the people in *Class Actions*. What were the efforts undertaken?

Create and post two charts to capture responses about school and community action: one for short-term and one for long-term actions. (See Action Planning #3 for many of these actions.)

4. Ask participants which actions they feel were effective in supporting safety and inclusion for the students and residents of Oxford, MS, Bloomington, IN, and Lancaster, CA then, now and in the future? Why? Are there other actions that you might recommend in these communities?

Action Planning (40 minutes)

1. Move on to the action-planning segment by reminding participants that the film features innovative and creative actions to bullying and intolerance. Now, we ask where we go from here?

2. Ask participants to identify the values that they believe help to sustain a long-term transformation in a community and how people relate to one another. Such values may include trust, compassion, courage, integrity, patience, etc. Stress that these values hopefully not only prevent such tragedies from occurring but also are the foundation to support a community to respond to bullying, intimidation, violence, or trauma should it occur.

3. Recalling the steps these three communities took to establish these values and move forward after their safety and inclusion were threatened, transition to generating specific action ideas to reinforce these values and promote positive intergroup relations, mutual respect and safety in their community. It may be most effective to form small groups to generate initial ideas, with reports back to the full group to follow. Some prompting questions may include:

- a. Identify 3-4 specific issues/challenges facing this community regarding intergroup relations and safety? (Recall the past tragedies/lessons learned earlier.)

- b. What actions will address these concerns? Are they practical and do-able?
- c. Who needs to be involved? How do we engage the key stakeholders and other members of the community?
- d. What existing community programs or activities can be strengthened to help promote these goals?
- e. What barriers do we face and how might we overcome them?

Action areas could be categorized to involve some or all of the following constituencies. The activities listed are ones that were undertaken by the students and residents in these three towns, which may inspire similar or new ideas in other communities. Additional examples of community action can be found at: www.NIOT.org

- **Local Government:** Conduct outreach to school leaders and educators; visit schools to learn about anti-bullying programs being developed by school leaders; provide support to local schools initiating programs; recruit local business owners to help fund programs; host open forums and meetings to help spread successful programs to other schools, initiate and pass anti-bullying legislation; create a resolution calling for "Not In Our School Week of Action"
- **Law Enforcement:** Hold community forums on safety; conduct media outreach; hold training on relationship-building with community members; improve hate crimes reporting systems; provide educator training on hate crimes; support teacher-led classroom discussions on bias and prejudice; public art exhibition
- **Faith Communities:** Host and invite interfaith community members and leaders to share experiences with violence and hatred in a safe space; host education/workshops for faith leaders and members; participate in festivals and holidays events of other faiths to show support
- **General Community:** Organize community-led events to support groups experiencing hate; create multicultural theatre event; attend public meetings and hearings calling for anti-hate activity
- **Media:** Cover the positive community responses to hate; invite participants on radio/TV programs to talk about initiatives to stand up to hate and intolerance

Note: If the audience represents multiple sectors of the community (law enforcement, government, community organizations, etc.), be sure to divide them into small groups with representation from multiple sectors in each group. Assign these small groups to generate ideas for action that can be implemented within various sectors of the community and/or across all groups represented.

If the audience primarily represents a single sector/organization in the community, this brainstorming process can focus specifically on ways to strengthen that agency/entity's role in combating hate and promoting respect, cross-cultural communication, etc. Discussion leaders should encourage such groups to think about internally-oriented efforts as well as external/ collaborative actions to engage them with important allies in the community.

Part C: Closing (10 minutes)

1. Wrap-up the program reinforcing the plans for documenting and sharing the ideas generated by the group, and the time and location of the next follow-up meeting.
2. Close by reminding participants of Bloomington Mayor Kruzan's comment, "An attack on one is an attack on all. And, it can become trite though, if you don't back that up with action." As such, invite each person to think of one specific action/change that they can make in their lives to advance the ideals that they have discussed, at the personal rather than at the organizational or community level.
3. After providing a minute to reflect on these ideas, ask for volunteers to share aloud their commitments. Solicit 5-10 ideas. Encourage participants to support one another in achieving these personal goals.
4. Ask all participants to complete the evaluation form. By filling out this form, they are helping us make improvements to the campaign so more people will be inclined to stand up to hatred in the future. Ask them to hand in the forms before leaving (You will want to make copies for your own use and return the originals to Not In Our Town).
5. Thank people for coming and remind them to attend the follow-up meeting, and to sign in so they can be included on any follow-up activities.

In Their Own Words

If audience members are reticent to engage, the following quotes from the film may help to generate dialogue or conversation. Consider writing the quotes on note cards in advance to use for reflection and discussion. Ask participants to form small groups to discuss an assigned quote; explore what it means to them and how it may help to inform next steps for their community.

"How could I have anything in common with the person that, you know, puts the Confederate flag in my face and not understand why it doesn't, you know, hurt me?" —MELISSA COLE, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENT

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"There's a lot of power in words. That statement made people feel like we were back when James Meredith was fighting to get into this university in 1962." —ARTAIR ROGERS, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI STUDENT

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"I don't think a bunch of students chanting at the University of Mississippi during a football game hurts the University of Mississippi's reputation in anyway, period. It's silliness." —THOMAS PICKFORD, OLE MISS ALUMNUS

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"Somebody comes through in the dark at night and breaks out your window. You don't know what they're capable of doing. You don't know what their next step is gonna be." — BEVERLY CALENDAR-ANDERSON, DIRECTOR OF BLOOMINGTON'S SAFE AND CIVIL CITY PROGRAM

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"For some people, seeing a symbol of hate makes them immediately feel other. Makes them tremble. Makes them frightened." — RABBI SUE LAIKIN SILBERBERG, INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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"We had two suicides that happened within 50 miles of our school and our town. When something like this happens so close to your own community it's a wake-up call and you realize that this could happen to any one of us and we've got to do something a little bit more because apparently what we were doing isn't working isn't enough." — LAURI MASSARI, COUNSELOR, DEL SUR MIDDLE SCHOOL

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"The phrase Not In Our School means a lot more now 'cause sometimes people will be like, bullying some other people and then people around them will be like 'Not in our school! Not in our school!' and they'll just be like what?! And then, then they'll just stop. That phrase has really helped out a lot." — LANCASTER STUDENT

Suggested Facilitation Tips and Techniques

*The following ideas were adapted from **Fostering Dialogues Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project**. For more helpful resources, visit www.publicconversations.org*

Facilitators have a lot to do. They need to establish and maintain a relaxed and welcoming tone; make everyone feel that their opinions are valid and welcome; use probing questions to deepen discussion; stay focused on the purpose of the dialogue even when the process takes unexpected turns. When doing this well, however, facilitators actually are not saying much and only enter the discussion when necessary. Here are some tips to guide the process:

Help participants by encouraging them to:

- Speak personally, rather than as a representative of a group.
- Share stories about ways in which their views, hopes, and concerns may have been shaped by their life experience.
- Shift from expressing positions to expressing hopes, fears, values, and assumptions.
- Not turn to the facilitator for answers, but rather to respond and engage directly with each other.
- Reflect on their assumptions before speaking.

Be aware of language.

- Try to avoid jargon and encourage others to do the same, define acronyms that some participants may not be familiar with, and be aware that small shifts in language make a big difference.
- Explore the meanings of buzz-words or emotionally charged terms that hold different meanings and connotations for different people.

Be aware of patterns of participation.

- Accommodate people who may be less comfortable with speaking in public and/or need more time to gather their thoughts
- Allow enough time for silent pauses after posing questions to allow everyone to think.
- Do not let one person dominate. Say, “I would like to hear some other perspectives on...”

- Avoid attending to one participant's personal needs at the expense of the group. Redirect by suggesting that the conversation could be continued privately at the break.

Interrupt, if needed:

- If needed, cut people off to keep following times on the agenda. In advance, you may say, "To do my job I may have to interrupt someone, much as I hate to do it. I hope you'll understand."
- If people are interrupting one another, consider saying, "When a conversation gets fast-paced it's hard not to interrupt. How about slowing down a bit and raising your hand when you want to speak?" Remind the group of the established Ground Rules.

Intervene, and redirect if dialogue seems to be going off-track:

- Inquire about what you notice, rather than make a quick judgment that may be based on a misreading of the situation.
- Invite participants to identify how the conversation may need to shift if they are to achieve their purposes.
- If concerned about someone becoming a target of hostility or criticism, mention that when someone has a different viewpoint than the majority, it makes that person both valuable for the diversity they bring and particularly vulnerable to feeling on the spot. Remind participants about listening for understanding.
- If needed, call for a break even if it wasn't planned.
 - If energy is sagging, call for a quick stretch break so that people can move around, or take a longer break so that people can get refreshments, go to the bathroom, etc.
 - If emotions are running strong in a way that threatens the spirit and atmosphere of the dialogue, a break can allow people to calm down. For example, you could say, "It seems that the pace and intensity of the conversation has picked up quite a bit. I suggest we take a minute to take a deep breath or reflect quietly."
 - If you need to collect your thoughts about what is happening and what you want to do next, call for a break and check in privately with a participant or a co-facilitator.

Using Conflict Constructively

The following recommendations were adapted from Everyday Democracy's Guide for Training Public Dialogue Facilitators. For more helpful content around effective facilitation, visit www.everyday-democracy.org.

Not all disagreement or conflict is bad. In fact, it can provide an opening to understanding. However, for dialogue to be productive, disagreements must be handled respectfully. A few reminders:

- Stick to the issue at hand. Don't allow the conversation to get personal.
- Remind participants of the shared ground rules, especially the use of "I" messages and the importance of listening for understanding.
- Ask the people in conflict, and the larger group, to help focus the conversation, saying, "What do you think is the root of the disagreement? What are the key issues here?" This moves the focus from the people in the disagreement to the issue at hand.
- Invite people to share the experiences that led to the formation of their opinions, saying, "Could you tell us more about any experiences in your life that have affected your feelings and thoughts about this issue?"
- Invite others into the conversation if conflict is escalating between two people. For example, say, "We've heard quite a bit from... Would someone else like to offer an opinion?" By bringing the larger group into the discussion, the focus shifts to a more general conversation.

Handling Unproductive Conflict

- Interrupt and remind group members of ground rules, if the conversation becomes heated.
- Intervene immediately and stop the conversation if it becomes personal or confrontational.
- Take a short break.
- Speak to individuals privately and ask them to comply with the ground rules.
- As a last resort, remove anyone who is disruptive.

If you have questions related to your screening, or would like additional information about Not In Our Town, please contact us:

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